

**JOINT WORKSHOP SESSION of the Burrillville Town Council and the Burrillville Historic District Commission to be held Wednesday, October 5, 2005 at 7:00 P.M. in the Town Council Chambers, Town Building, 105 Harrisville Main St., Harrisville, for and within the Town of Burrillville.**

**Burrillville Town Council:**

**Members Present: Council President Wallace F. Lees, Councilors Jacqueline Zahn, William A. Andrews, Nancy F. Binns, Margaret L. Dudley, Ronald E. Faford and William E. Gonyea.**

**Members Absent: None**

**Burrillville Historic District Commission:**

**Members Present: Kathleen Albuquerque, Patricia Henderson, and Barbara Langlois.**

**Members Absent: Chairman Charles Newell was excused due to illness.**

**05-270 Relative to discussions related to a proposal for Historic District(s) within the Town of Burrillville.**

**Council President Wallace F. Lees asked Thomas J. Kravitz, Town Planner and Economic Development Coordinator, to introduce the workshop. Mr. Kravitz noted that there were three issues developed by the Historic District Commission to be reviewed and considered:**

- 1. Zoning Ordinance §11-8.11 Historic District Zoning (includes Historic District Map)**
- 2. Standards and Guidelines for Historic Properties**
- 3. Examples of Local Financial Incentives**

**Mr. Kravitz spoke of financial incentives, which might be used to encourage owners of non-contributing structures to become involved in the program. Mr. Kravitz acknowledged that Historic Districts can be controversial and asked the Town Council to consider a process by which conforming structures would be reviewed using the guidelines and non-conforming structures would not be reviewed by the Historic District Commission but handled administratively by the Building Official.**

**Mr. Kravitz indicated that the proposed ordinance was modeled on State law and the guidelines were based on those developed for the City of Providence by a private consultant. Mr. Kravitz offered to answer questions.**

**Throughout the discussion, Councilor Dudley raised specific**

**concerns related to the proposal, i.e.**

- building features that might be included or excluded from review**
- whether historic districts strengthen the local economy, as stated in the proposal**
- items that addressed features such as swimming pools and landscaping which seemed to be outside the intent of the ordinance**
- insufficient provisions for removal of members of the Commission, if necessary**
- references which implied approval of renovations to the interior of structures (i.e. “floor plans”) although the ordinance indicates that only exterior renovations would fall under the ordinance**
- the tone of some language, i.e. the definition of “economic hardship”**
- expenses to the homeowner, i.e. fees for professional evaluations, certification by the commission, zoning variances, etc.**
- extending timeframes for decisions**
- why a review might be necessary although a certificate of appropriateness is not required**

**Councilor Margaret L. Dudley asked whether the Town was required by State law to establish Historic Districts; Mr. Kravitz indicated that it was not, but that it was required by the Comprehensive Plan.**

**Councilor Dudley noted that Pascoag and Mapleville are not National Historic Districts and appeared to be inappropriately included. Mr. Kravitz noted that the Town Council could remove these districts,**

explaining that they had been included to provide tax incentive opportunities to a greater number of owners.

Councilor Dudley pointed out that the provisions of the ordinance would be mandatory. Mr. Kravitz concurred, suggesting that the proposal could be amended to provide flexibility for non-conforming structures.

Councilor Dudley recommended that the Commission should be required to consider alternate materials. Mr. Kravitz indicated that the members of the Historic District Commission would be amenable to considering alternatives (i.e. certain vinyl materials) but noted that such alternatives might disqualify a homeowner from State credits.

Councilor Nancy F. Binns asked whether there would be identification of historic structures and notification to owners prior to adoption of any ordinance. Mr. Kravitz explained the use of a survey to identify contributing structures. Walter J. Kane, Town Solicitor, discussed the adoption of ordinances and the notification process involved. Councilor Binns raised concerns about owners on a limited income who might be unable to comply; she pointed out the possibility that the structures would be allowed to deteriorate as a result of the districts.

Councilor Binns asked whether a buyer of a home in a historic residence would receive notification at the time of purchase that the

residence was located in a historic district. The matter was discussed but it was unclear whether the information would be required to be disclosed by the seller.

Councilors Dudley and Binns noted that the language implied that owners might be compelled to sell properties that they could not afford to maintain in accordance with the ordinance. Alternative language was recommended.

Councilor Dudley asked for clarification of routine maintenance that would be allowed without review. The matter was discussed. Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, noted that repairs and maintenance that do not require a building permit would not require review by the Historic District Commission.

Councilor Binns asked about elevation drawings and when they would be required. Mr. Kravitz explained that for a conforming structure for which major restoration or an addition were being considered, elevation drawings would be required. Mr. Kravitz said that elevations drawings would be required by the Building Official for this type of renovation even if there were no Historic District. Generally, he said, only photographs would be required for a Historic District Commission review.

Councilor William A. Andrews noted that exterior site work was included as a category on the certificate of appropriateness.

Councilor Andrews suggested that landscape features should be excluded. Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, asked whether work that did not require regulation, i.e. a building permit, would require a certificate of appropriateness from the Historic District Commission. It was Mr. Kravitz's understanding that it would not be required; landscaping, stone walls, etc. would be considered. Mr. Wood summarized the discussion, saying that it must be clear what is required and that there must be relief for hardships.

Walter J. Kane, Town Solicitor, discussed the difference between the proposed ordinance that the Town Council was reviewing and the Standards and Guidelines. Mr. Kane suggested that if owners intended to renovate in a manner inconsistent with the current structure, they would refer to the guidelines for acceptability.

Mr. Kravitz said that the purpose would be to protect those building that are historic. Mr. Kane indicated there would be no requirement for buildings within Historic District that are non-conforming. Mr. Kane said that when owners of non-conforming buildings apply for building permits, the Building Official could inform them that they might be eligible for credits if they conform. Only those buildings determined to have historic value would fall under the ordinance.

Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, addressed the possibility of owners participating on a voluntary basis to take advantage of a tax credit. Mr. Kravitz said that there was nothing in the current proposal that is

**voluntary; but that it could be amended so that the program would be voluntary for non-conforming properties. Mr. Wood asked whether a voluntary approach could be taken for all properties.**

**Walter J. Kane, Town Solicitor, pointed out that Historic Districts are intended to preserve the ambiance of the villages. He suggested that if it were the Town Council's intent to preserve the character of the villages, then it would be important to look at historic district zoning to accomplish that preservation. On the other hand, he said, if the character of the Town is not a factor to the community then historic district zoning is less important.**

**Councilor William A. Andrews discussed the advantages of modern construction as it relates to maintenance, appearance, and energy efficiency. Councilor Andrews said that there are quality modern materials that meet these requirements but provide a good appearance. He suggested that these types of materials should be acceptable.**

**There was a discussion of items (i.e. fire escapes) that might be ordered by the minimum housing official and whether the Historic District Commission's decision would take precedence. Mr. Kravitz suggested that there would be an exchange and consensus among the groups. Mr. Wood suggested that the Council's decisions relative to Historic Districts would be the guiding force for many decisions.**

Councilor Margaret L. Dudley said that she did not support the proposal but believed a voluntary program might be more acceptable. Councilor William E. Gonyea concurred. Councilor Jacqueline Zahn pointed out that the Town Council had appointed the Historic District Commission, that the Commission and Administration had put considerable time and effort into the proposal, that the Comprehensive Plan supports the concept and that the Council should decide on a course before requiring more work from the Commission and Administration.

Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, summarized the discussion. He commented that the Town Council appeared to consider a voluntary program more acceptable and, if that was the case, the standards could be reviewed accordingly. Mr. Wood suggested that specific technical comments be sent directly to Thomas J. Kravitz, Town Planner and Economic Development Coordinator, and the Commission. Mr. Wood also noted that it might be possible to incorporate a Historic District into the Redevelopment Districts. Mr. Wood pointed out the importance of researching the scope and impact of any program for which public support is asked.

Mr. Wood noted that the proposal might be feasible on a voluntary basis for the short term, with consideration for full implementation in the long range. Councilors William A. Andrews, Ronald E. Faford, Nancy F. Binns and Jacqueline Zahn and Council President Wallace F. Lees said they did not object to a voluntary or advisory program.



**There was some discussion of whether owners would be eligible for tax credits if involved in a voluntary program. Walter J. Kane, Town Solicitor, was to review the State law and report on the matter.**

**Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, asked whether there was interest in moving forward with the proposal, as presented, if a voluntary program were not feasible. Walter J. Kane, Town Solicitor, noted that the Historic Districts would cover a relatively small area and that, after an inventory were complete, public discussions that included owners within the areas might clarify the inclination of the residents. There was discussion of other communities that have historic districts and the varying success of the programs.**

**VOTED to adjourn at 8:35 P.M.**

**Motion by Councilor Jacqueline Zahn. Seconded by Councilor Ronald E. Faford. The motion was unanimous. Voting in favor of the motion were Council President Wallace F. Lees, Councilors Jacqueline Zahn, William A. Andrews, Nancy F. Binns, Margaret L. Dudley, Ronald E. Faford and William E. Gonyea.**

**The workshop was taped. The tape is on file with the record of the workshop.**

**Louise R. Phaneuf, Town Clerk**